

Margaret P. Grafeld, Director

☒ Release ( ) Excise ( ) Deny

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AY029

Exemption(s):

Declassify: ( ) In Part ☒ In Full MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

( ) Classify as ( ) Extend as ( ) Downgrade to

Date Declassify on Reason

DATE: December 6, 1976

SUBJECT: Conversation with Captain Roberto J. Seisdedos: Part I

PARTICIPANTS: Captain Roberto J. Seisdedos, Human Rights Working Group  
Minister Miguel Angel Espeche Gil, Chief of the  
Department of North American Affairs  
Counsel Bernardo Garcia Jimenez, North American Desk  
Counsel Carlos Louge, North American Desk  
Mr. Charles W. Bray, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State  
Mr. Maxwell Chaplin, Deputy Chief of Mission  
Colonel Paul A. Coughlin, Defense Attaché  
Mr. Randolph Reed, Economic Officer  
Mr. Wayne S. Smith, Political Counselor  
Mr. Hugh McL. Woodward, Public Affairs Officer

PLACE: Residence of Deputy Chief of Mission

COPIES TO: AMB, DCM, ARA-Mr. Bray

I opened the conversation by outlining to the Argentines the difficult years through which the United States had just passed and which in my opinion resulted in the American people turning back and reconfirming their faith in certain fundamental values upon which our country had originally been founded. One of those values, I pointed out, had to do with human rights, thus when American Congressmen, or others in the United States, raise the question of human rights, they are not doing so as voices in the wind. On the contrary, they are accurately reflecting the mainstream of U. S. political thought and should be taken seriously. Captain Seisdedos said he was sure Argentines understood and shared this concern with human rights. However, he said, Argentina is now engaged in a very dirty fight, with bitterness, and possibly atrocities, on both sides. He described his own experiences in which he had found a bomb in his garage, wreaths had been placed on his car, he has received threatening calls, seen his friends killed and is constantly fearful for the safety of his family. Under these circumstances, it is very difficult to maintain the balance which all civilized men would wish. He stressed that Argentina valued its relations with other countries, and especially with the United States, but that the government was locked in a life or death struggle with Marxist subversion delinquents and must win. Hence, the government would press this fight to the full no matter how those who do not comprehend what is happening might condemn it.

POL:WSSmith:mg

Cleared: ARA:CWBray

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I said that the U. S. fully understood that Argentina was indeed involved in a struggle with the terrorists and that we wished them well in that struggle. I stressed, however, that even in a war the law must be respected. All governments are sworn to uphold the law and if they do not do so, they lose their legitimacy.

Mr. Smith added that if the government did not uphold the law, it risked placing itself on the same level with those groups which were attempting to destroy it. He noted too that it is very much in the government's interest to carry on the struggle against terrorism with a minimum of excesses and violations of the rights of citizens. Otherwise, it risked a popular reaction which might, in the long term, be very serious.

Captain Seisdedos indicated that he was not attempting to justify things which he recognized were wrong and should not happen. He was simply trying to explain the emotions behind the situation which made it very difficult to prevent excesses. There have been excesses in all wars and this one was no different.

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